

III: June 1953

Stalin's death in March 1953 raised expectations everywhere that the new Soviet leadership would relax its grip on Eastern Europe. As the first actions of the new leadership proved these hopes to be false, popular revolts broke out in East Germany, Poland, and Hungary. All were swiftly and brutally put down, either by the indigenous Communist regime or by Soviet bloc troops brought in for the purpose.

The Berlin uprising of 16-17 June 1953 was the first of these protests. It began with an orderly march in protest of newly increased work quotas involving an estimated 5,000 workers at noon on the sixteenth. This ended about three hours later, but protests resumed early the next day with some 17,000 people in the streets, a figure that may eventually have risen to anywhere from 30,000 to 50,000 to several hundred thousand by noon. Traffic came to a halt and the demonstration turned violent; thousands of people swarmed through the Potsdamer Platz to the Lustgarten Platz, tearing down Communist flags and overturning kiosks. But East German and Soviet troops with tanks and armored cars had quietly moved into East Berlin the previous night. Early on the afternoon of the seventeenth they drove into the crowds, firing automatic weapons and small arms. At 2:20 PM the East German government declared a state of emergency; the revolt was quickly crushed. Like after-shocks following a major earthquake, strikes, demonstrations and isolated "incidents" continued to occur throughout the DDR over the next few weeks, but with the crackdown on the seventeenth the Communist regime demonstrated that, even if it had little popular support, it was nevertheless firmly in control.

The Berlin uprising was a spontaneous action that took American intelligence officers by surprise. Although the United States had waged an active propaganda campaign that encouraged dissatisfaction with the Communist regime, it had not worked directly to foster open rebellion and had no mechanism in place to exploit the situation when it arose. US authorities in Berlin thus had no alternative but to adopt an attitude of strict neutrality. Many East Germans nonetheless expected the United States to intervene. These expectations persisted, unintentionally fueled by a US-sponsored food-distribution program that began on 1 July and lasted until the East Berlin government put an end to it in August.²

The Berlin uprising effectively ended the limited political plurality hitherto tolerated by the East German regime. More than 6,000 people were arrested. A statewide purge eliminated dissidents both in the official party, the SED (Sozialistische Einheits Partei Deutschland), and in the state-tolerated "opposition" parties. Ironically, the principal effect of the uprising was to further consolidate the existing power structure in the DDR: East Germany's President Walter Ulbricht used the revolt as an excuse to eliminate rival factions within the SED, while measures were taken to ensure that the security apparatus would not be caught napping again.

III-1: NIE 81: Probable Soviet Courses of Action with Respect to Germany Through Mid-1954, 22 May 1953.

III-2: SE 47: Probable Effect of Recent Developments in Eastern Germany on Soviet Policy with Respect to Germany, 24 July 1953

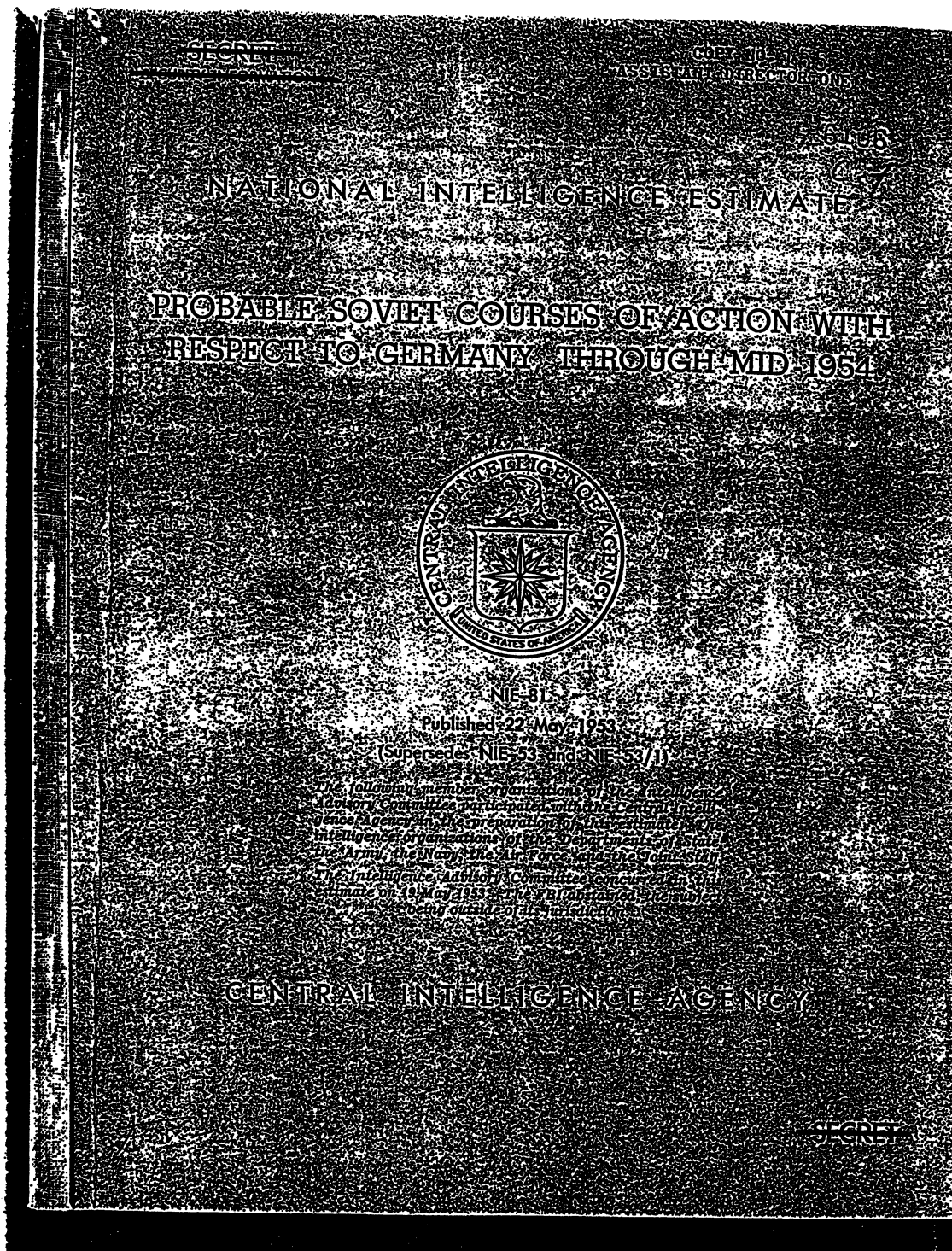
These two Estimates weigh the importance of the DDR to the Soviet bloc before and after the Berlin uprising and predict Soviet actions to stabilize control of the East German state. Of note is the special concern accorded the Federal Republic of Germany in Soviet planning.

III-3: Comment on the East Berlin Uprising, 17 June 1953 (MORI No. 144301).

This the first full report of the uprising to be disseminated in Washington.

III-4: Closing of Berlin Borders, 18 June 1953 (MORI No. 144211). (PDF File)

The powder-keg atmosphere that remained on 18 June is reflected in this terse report of security measures taken along the inter-Berlin border.



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PROBABLE SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO GERMANY, THROUGH MID-1954

THE PROBLEM

To estimate probable Soviet courses of action with respect to Germany, through mid-1954.

ESTIMATE

1. We believe that current Soviet "peace" tactics do not indicate any change in the ultimate Kremlin objective with respect to Germany, which is to bring the entire country under Soviet control. The Kremlin must recognize, however, that it is not in a position to advance directly toward this ultimate objective by political action because of the hostility of the overwhelming majority of Germans to Communism. It must also recognize that an attempt to impose Communist control over all Germany by force would result in general war.

2. We believe that through the period of this estimate the Kremlin will seek by political warfare to prevent or at least to retard the Western program for West German rearmament and the integration of West Germany with the West. The Soviet leaders will probably continue to believe that there is a good chance of thwarting the Western program through a political warfare campaign which plays upon Western European fear of German rearmament and upon German desire for unity. Even if the EDC is ratified and West German rearmament begins, the Kremlin will probably believe that the implementation of the EDC agreements and the rearming of West Germany will proceed slowly, and that there will continue to be opportunities to thwart the Western program. In any case, it is unlikely that by mid-1954 the re-

armament of West Germany will have advanced to a point at which the Soviet leaders would regard West Germany as a serious military threat.

3. The Kremlin in its political warfare directed against West Germany will seek to encourage defeatism and neutralism by emphasizing Soviet military might and determination, while at the same time it will use "peace" tactics to counter rearmament sentiment. Soviet propaganda will appeal to German nationalism by exploiting anti-American themes and by seeking to aggravate Franco-German differences. Trade offers and the lure of former German markets in Eastern Europe and mainland China will be dangled before West German businessmen.

4. As part of its "peace" tactics, the Kremlin may during the period of this estimate make proposals for the establishment of a united, independent, and neutralized Germany on the basis of free all-German elections and the withdrawal of all occupation forces from Germany. However, we believe that such proposals would contain conditions which the Kremlin would intend to be unacceptable to the West, or that the Kremlin would intend to prevent the implementation of agreements embodying these proposals.

5. We believe that during the period of this estimate, the Kremlin will not give up or

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weaken its control over East Germany even to prevent West German integration with the West or West German rearmament. So long as it retains East Germany, the Kremlin will remain in a position to use East Germany as a lever in negotiations with the West and to prevent German unification on terms unfavorable to the ultimate extension of Soviet control to all Germany. Furthermore, so long as Soviet troops occupy East Germany the USSR will retain a valuable base for either offensive or defensive military operations and for attempts to intimidate the West. Finally, East Germany has great economic and technological importance for the Bloc. For instance, we estimate that East Germany contributes about 40 percent of the Bloc's total production of uranium ores and concentrates. It is unlikely that the Kremlin will surrender the great advantages which it derives from its control over East Germany in return for the establishment of a united and neutral Germany which it might hope subsequently to subvert. The Kremlin almost certainly fears that, even if a united Germany were not only neutralized but disarmed, it would eventually rearm and turn against the USSR.

6. We believe, therefore, that the Kremlin will retain and consolidate its hold on East Germany and will seek to increase East German economic and military power. The Soviet program will be tantamount to making East Germany into a full-fledged Satellite with security measures as rigorous, and isolation of the population almost as complete as in the other Satellite states. However, the Kremlin probably believes that the formal integration of East Germany into the Soviet Bloc as a "People's Democracy" would be likely to hasten the rearmament of West Germany and its integration with the West and to turn the pressure for German unity against the USSR. Therefore, the Kremlin will probably continue to make concessions to the needs of the propaganda campaign for all-German unity by preserving a multi-party facade in East Germany and by allowing some non-governmental groups to maintain tenuous connections with West Germany. On the other hand, if the Soviet "peace" tactics are abandoned and the EDC agreements are ratified, the Kremlin

may conclude a separate peace treaty and an alliance with East Germany and incorporate it into the Bloc as a "People's Democracy."

7. The Kremlin probably estimates that the maintenance of Soviet control in East Germany is dependent upon the presence of Soviet forces in East Germany. However, the Kremlin may estimate that it could greatly increase the effectiveness of its political warfare campaign by removing some of its overt control mechanisms from East Germany, including some of its military forces. The Kremlin might expect that such moves would give the impression of Soviet willingness to withdraw entirely from East Germany, thus intensifying German hopes for unification and the expectations in Western Europe, particularly in France, for a satisfactory settlement of the German problem.

8. It is even conceivable that at some stage the Soviet leaders might withdraw all Soviet forces from East Germany, if they were convinced that such a step would lead to the withdrawal of all US forces from Europe and would create conditions favorable to the imposition of Soviet control over all of Germany. This is only a remote possibility, at least for the period of this estimate, but we believe it cannot be excluded entirely.

9. Despite the recent lessening of Soviet pressure on West Berlin, we believe that the Kremlin objective of forcing the withdrawal of the Western Powers from West Berlin remains unchanged. So long as the Kremlin continues its "peace" tactics, it will probably not undertake new harassing measures against West Berlin. However, preparations for sealing off West Berlin from East Germany and East Berlin have been substantially completed. If the "peace" tactics are abandoned, West Berlin will probably be isolated from adjacent Soviet-controlled territory. The likelihood of interference with communications between West Berlin and West Germany, possibly including a surface blockade of West Berlin, will increase substantially if the EDC agreements are ratified. However, we believe that the Kremlin will carefully assess Western reaction to the various forms of pressure employed, and that

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the Kremlin is unlikely to adopt courses of action which, in its estimation, would involve grave risk of general war.

10. In conclusion, there can be no doubt that the Kremlin regards West Germany as potentially the most powerful state in Western Europe, and as potentially the most danger-

ous, both to the realization of Soviet aggressive plans and to the security of the Bloc. During the period of this estimate, the Kremlin is likely to believe that the German situation is not yet dangerous and that there remain opportunities for influencing developments in Germany by political warfare.

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SPECIAL ESTIMATE

PROBABLE EFFECT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS
IN EASTERN GERMANY ON SOVIET POLICY
WITH RESPECT TO GERMANY



SE-47

Approved 21 July 1953

Published 24 July, 1953

The Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 21 July 1953. The FBI abstained, the subject being outside of its jurisdiction.

The following member organizations of the Intelligence Advisory Committee participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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PROBABLE EFFECT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN GERMANY ON SOVIET POLICY WITH RESPECT TO GERMANY

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the probable effect of recent developments in Eastern Germany on Soviet policy with respect to Germany.

ESTIMATE

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EAST GERMANY

1. *The Recent Communist Reforms in East Germany.* In late May 1953 the USSR appointed a civilian to the post of High Commissioner of the Eastern zone of Germany, thereby implying a deemphasis of Soviet military control over that area. On 10 June the Communist authorities in East Germany proposed a series of measures involving major modifications and, in some cases, even reversals of past Communist programs. The government subsequently announced that it would halt the collective farm program at its present level; restore confiscated property and full civil rights to East German refugees who returned; make state bank credits available to private businessmen; provide a general amnesty for prisoners guilty of minor economic offenses; and issue ration cards to some 250,000 East Germans who had recently been deprived of them. On the same day the East German Government and Protestant Church leaders jointly announced that they had resolved most of their outstanding conflicts.

2. Soviet recognition that the accelerated pace of East German satellization had produced serious popular dissatisfaction almost certainly was a factor in bringing about the adop-

tion of these measures. Though the Communists realized that these measures would retard their basic program of communization, they may have felt that the establishment of substantial armed forces and the rapid pace of industrialization were causing dangerous strains in the East German economy. It is also likely that they expected to encourage West German belief that early unification is feasible. They may have hoped thus to obstruct West German rearming and integration with Western Europe and to help bring about the defeat of Adenauer in the forthcoming West German elections.

3. *The Disorders in Mid-June.* A small demonstration took place in East Berlin on 16 June and expanded on the following day into strikes and riots there and throughout the Soviet zone. The Soviet authorities declared martial law and proceeded to put down the disorders, relying almost exclusively on the use of Soviet troops. The USSR began to withdraw these troops on 24 June, when order was apparently restored. However, there are reports of continuing outbreaks, and some Soviet troops remain in the affected areas.

4. At this time the full significance of these disorders is difficult to assess. At least:

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a. The disorders demonstrated the intensity of East German resentment against the regime and the willingness of the East German people to undertake active resistance despite the extended period of Communist control.

b. The extent of the disorders appears to have been wholly unexpected by the East German authorities. The decision to employ primarily Soviet forces to quell the disorders indicated Soviet distrust of the East German police, military, and security forces.

c. The disorders themselves, and the fact that Soviet troops were required to maintain the authority of the East German Government, have further discredited that government in the eyes of the East German people. More significantly, the government has lost standing with the Soviet leadership.

d. The disorders have probably convinced the USSR that Soviet control over East Germany can be assured only by maintaining Soviet troops in the area.

e. The disorders have further encouraged German hopes for unification and considerably increased West German demands on the Adenauer government for greater readiness to explore possibilities for unification even at the expense of progress toward rearmament and European integration.

f. A workers' revolt against the authorities of a "workers state" is in itself a setback for worldwide Communist propaganda.

THE EFFECTS OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS ON SOVIET POLICY IN EAST GERMANY

5. The riots have not so far resulted in a reversal of the June concessions. In fact, the Communist authorities in East Germany have not only announced that these measures will be carried through, but that they will be amplified. For example, a decrease has been promised in the allocation of resources to heavy industry and the East German army (KVP) in favor of an increased supply of food and consumer goods. We believe that the Communists will attempt to implement these economic concessions within their economic capabilities. We estimate, however,

that they are unlikely to carry out any economic or other measures that would endanger their control over East Germany.¹

6. We believe that within the next several months the Soviet authorities will probably reconstitute the East German Government and purge the East German Communist Party (SED). Although the USSR would achieve a propaganda advantage in both East and West Germany by including more non-Communist representatives in the East German Government, there are few, if any, political leaders left in East Germany who are not well-known Communist collaborators. Hence, we believe that the USSR will build a new East German Government around a purged SED. Non-SED parties may be encouraged to take a more independent line, to assume some superficial aspects of a "loyal opposition," and to attempt to develop ties with West German political parties.

7. In restoring order and maintaining control over East Germany the Soviets are faced by a dilemma. Additional concessions and admissions of error may convince the people in East Germany and in other parts of the Soviet Bloc that their plight can be relieved by active resistance. If, on the other hand, the Kremlin withdraws all concessions and exacts submission by a regime of force and terror, it must reverse its newly adopted "soft" policy and jeopardize its chance to influence West Germans. We believe that the Kremlin will probably attempt to continue this "soft" policy in East Germany, although it will employ force as necessary to maintain order.

SOVIET APPROACH TO GERMAN UNIFICATION

8. The Soviet approach to German unification will be determined within a larger framework than that of recent developments in East Germany alone. However, the USSR will not ignore the renewed upsurge of unification sentiment which has appeared in both East and West Germany. The USSR will

¹ See footnote of the Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, to the first sentence of paragraph 9, page 3.

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probably agree to a Four Power conference, though not necessarily to the proposals contained in the Western notes of 15 July. It will probably regard such a conference as an appropriate forum in which to exploit the unification sentiment in Germany in an effort to delay West German rearmament and integration with the West. In such a meeting the USSR might propose several plausible but unacceptable schemes of German unification, involving, for example, various methods of holding "free" elections which would not in fact be free, or a German unification on the Austrian pattern, with continued military occupation. The USSR might even advance proposals unsatisfactory to itself, but which it would expect the Western Powers to reject, hoping to derive propaganda advantages from the fact of Western rejection. Despite these and other possibilities, the USSR would probably consider that the basic alternatives before it in such a negotiation reduce to two:

a. To agree to the creation of a unified and neutral Germany on the basis of free elections and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Germany, which would mean the relinquishment of Soviet control in East Germany; or

b. To negotiate for unification, but with no intention of agreeing to any solution that would involve the relinquishment of Soviet control over East Germany.

9. We estimate that the USSR is unlikely to adopt the first alternative.^{*} However, recent developments in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in the Bloc suggest the possibility of some change in Soviet policy. The Kremlin might come to the conclusion that a solution of the German problem could no longer be postponed, and yet could not be achieved without losing control of East Germany. It might even see some compensating advantages in the first alternative. For instance,

an agreement on a unified, neutralized Germany would eliminate the potential German contribution to Western military strength. In addition, the USSR might estimate that such an agreement would relax present East-West tension and thus abort the Western impetus for rearmament and weaken the cohesion of the NATO Powers. Moreover, the USSR might believe that if Western troops were withdrawn from West Germany, the stationing of US troops elsewhere in Western Europe would create dissension between the US and its allies.

10. We believe that the second of these alternatives is far more likely.² So long as Soviet troops occupy East Germany, the USSR will retain a valuable base for either offensive or defensive military operations and for attempts to intimidate the West. So long as the Kremlin retains control over East Germany, it remains in a position to use East Germany as a lever in negotiations with the West and to prevent any unification of Germany which would prejudice its ultimate objectives in Germany. East Germany has great economic and technological importance for the Soviet Bloc. The Kremlin almost certainly fears that a united Germany would eventually rearm and turn against the USSR. It is, therefore, unlikely that the Kremlin will surrender the great advantages which it derives from its control over East Germany in return for the establishment of a united and neutral Germany which it might hope, at best, eventually to subvert. Furthermore, the Kremlin probably estimates that weakening or relinquishing its control over East Germany would have adverse political and psychological effects on the remainder of the Soviet Bloc. In conclusion, therefore, as indicated in NIE-81,³ we believe it unlikely that the USSR will agree to any solution of the German problem that involves the surrender of Soviet control over East Germany.

^{*}The Deputy Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff, believes that the first alternative is more likely.

²NIE-81, "Probable Soviet Courses of Action with Respect to Germany, through Mid-1954," published 22 May 1953.

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 17 June 1953
 the HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM of
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COMMENT ON EAST BERLIN UPRISING

Date 12/19/94

HRP 94-1

The uprising of tens of thousands of East Berliners on 16 and 17 June, which had to be quelled by Soviet troops, is an unprecedented demonstration of hostility to a Communist regime. In West Germany, the uprising has increased demands for German unification, but East German Premier Grotewohl says the riots will make unity more difficult. The uprising will also have serious consequences for the Soviet "peace campaign" throughout the world.

The rioting apparently commenced with a small controlled demonstration of some 5,000 people, about noon on 16 June, against the recently decreed 10 percent increase in work norms. It is likely, though unproved, that this was planned to enable the government to yield on the question without losing face.

About 2 P.M., however, a cabinet minister addressing the crowd was pushed aside by a worker who shouted, "What you have declared here is of no interest to us. We want to be free. Our demonstration is not against norms This is a people's revolt." The demonstration dispersed about an hour later with threats of a general strike. American observers mingled freely with the small remaining groups, in which party workers seemed to be trying to argue down demonstrators complaining against food shortages and lack of freedom. During the evening there was sporadic violence.

At 8 P.M., Premier Grotewohl and Communist Party Chief Ulbricht addressed a closed meeting of the Berlin party members calling for a rallying of the people around the party and promising "further far-reaching measures" to correct the past mistakes.

At 4:30 A.M. on Wednesday, a West Berlin Police unit observed 12 Russian tanks approaching the US Sector border in the areas of Gross Zeithen. At 5 A.M. an advance unit of 20 Russian tanks were observed passing Adlershof in East Berlin in the direction of the center of East Berlin.

By 8:30 A.M. there were 17,000 marchers in East Berlin. Soviet soldiers wearing battle dress and in troop carriers were located in various sections to reinforce the police, but at this time there was no intervention on their part.

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In the course of the morning struggle, nearly 2,000 persons came into the West sectors of Berlin, but remained quiet. By 11 A.M. some of the Berlin elevated railway traffic had been halted; a complete cessation of both elevated railway and subway traffic was subsequently reported.

Later, up to 30,000 demonstrators on the Potsdamer Platz overturned kiosks and police shelters, and tore down Communist flags and posters. Smoke columns were reportedly seen rising from the East German government's main office building, and Peoples' Police inside finally opened fire on the crowd, wounding some. Fire hoses failed to disperse the crowd.

In the Lustgarten Platz, where the demonstrators planned to converge eventually, Soviet tanks took up stations and German reinforcements from the Saxony area were called for. Increasing numbers of the Peoples' Police were reported defecting to the West.

The West German Post Office reported that the East German postal and telecommunications workers struck and that Peoples' Police had taken over the communications. From noon on, the demonstrators were reported to be uncontrollable; the violence being accompanied by shouts of "Ivan go home."

Press estimates of the size of the mobs vary from 50,000 to several hundred thousand.

Shortly after noon actual firing was heard from West Berlin. One report stated that 15 Soviet medium tanks, 20 armored cars, and 30 truckloads of machinegunners had been concentrated on the 50,000-man mob storming the government headquarters. Tanks drove into the mob here. Both Soviet and East German forces used small arms fire to scatter the mobs. Forty wounded were brought to one West Berlin hospital alone, after being hit by bullets or clubbed.

At 2:20 P.M., the East Berlin radio announced a state of emergency in the Soviet Sector, banned all demonstrations, rallies, and gatherings of more than three persons, proclaimed a curfew from 8 P.M. to 4 A.M., and declared violators punishable according to martial law.

It is believed that by the most serious local disturbances had been brought under control when this announcement was made.

All other broadcasts by the East German radio minimized the uprising. At 4 A.M. on 17 June it referred blandly to an SED meeting the previous evening at which Ulbricht had said that the party should listen more carefully to the criticisms of the working people, and Grotewohl had promised measures to increase the standard of living. Forty-five minutes later it announced in a similar brief, that Ulbricht had promised to increase the supply of consumers goods.

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At 6 A.M. the radio stated that the demonstrations of the previous day had been only local, incited by provocateurs from West Berlin. At 10:30 it announced that the majority of the workers in Berlin had resumed work. At 1:35 P.M. a Grotewohl statement announced that the 28 May decree for the raising of work norms by June 30 had been abolished.

Shortly after, at 2:20 P.M., came the broadcast declaring a state of emergency and 15 minutes later the entire East German network went on the air again with the appeal that provocations and grave disturbances in the Democratic sector of Berlin would only make the establishment of German unity more difficult. The government asked the population to help restore order and create conditions for normal and peaceful work; and also to apprehend the provocateurs and turn them over to the police.

At 5:33 P.M., in ostensible capitulation to the demands of the workers, the radio announced that "the decisions of the Politburo of the SED and of the government assured the prompt fulfillment of your justified demands." The regular program was interrupted about an hour later for a similar appeal to the people to maintain order. Western provocateurs were again blamed for the disturbances.

Actually, the only known formal encouragement from West Germans came at 5 on 17 June, when the leader of the West Berlin German Trade Union Federation, using the facilities of the American Radio in Berlin, requested the East Berlin population to support the day's demonstrations. He stated that he could not give them instruction, but only advice. He spoke of the justification of their demands for tolerable work norms, prompt payment of wages, and a reduced cost of living.

Latest press reports state that the entire Soviet Zone railroad network is on strike, and that rioting and strikes have broken out also in Dresden, Halle, Chemnitz, Zwickau, and a large number of other industrial centers.

The rioting, coming hard on the heels of the East German Government's 9 June campaign of conciliation, has left the regime in a dilemma.

To quiet popular clamor Deputy Premier Ulbricht has already ordered an increase of consumer goods production. Steps will probably be taken also to improve working conditions and adjust wages.

But the regime was defeated in its effort to bow gracefully to the demands of workers, and instead has given the appearance of weakness. This could encourage the populace to even greater resistance. Hence the government, for its own security, may have to reverse that part of its 9 June program calling for freer movement of the populace. Severe reprisals have already been ordered for the "provocateurs," and this move runs directly contrary to the "peace offensive."

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INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

COUNTRY Germany (Berlin)
SUBJECT Closing of Berlin Borders

REPORT NO. [REDACTED]
DATE DISTR. 18 June 1953

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PLACE ACQUIRED Germany, Berlin

BY CABLE

THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
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DISSEMINATION NUMBER
FD-170

SOURCE: [REDACTED] Appraisal of Content: 3.

1. Since about 9:00 in the morning of 18 June, East German police, both regular police and members of the KVP, supported by Russian soldiers with tanks, have barred all the entrances into the Eastern sector of Berlin from West Berlin. No one has been allowed to cross, not even persons holding East German identification papers who were attempting to return to East Berlin. Civilians (presumably belonging to the SED) with machine guns are firing at individuals who try to cross the line without permission.
2. This is the most complete isolation of West Berlin from the Russian zone that has yet been enforced.
3. The Glienicke Bridge leading from the American sector to Potsdam is still open.

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the HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM of
the Central Intelligence Agency.

Date 3/9/94
HRP 94-1